Sri:
Sriman Narayana Charanau Sharanam

Vaulting Beyond the Crossbar - Vedanta Sadhana Explained Through Pole-Vaulting

1) The Run-Up (Antahkarana-shuddhi & Sadhana Chatushtaya) -

Pole-vaulting: The approach run is more than speed: it is rhythm, alignment, and composure. The athlete calibrates strides so the take-off foot meets the box at exactly the right spot, with the chest tall, eyes steady, and the pole tip tracking a precise arc. Any erratic step, hesitation, or over-acceleration forces last-second corrections that bleed energy and unsettle balance. The whole runway is a rehearsal of trust: carry kinetic energy cleanly forward, not sideways or downward.

Vedanta: The run-up corresponds to preparing the mind (antahkarana-shuddhi) through dharma, karma-yoga and upasana. This is not dispensable; it is the velocity that will be converted into height. Dharma quiets inner cross-winds (guilt, friction). Karma-yoga – acting in isvara-arpita-buddhi – mutes craving and resistance, so effort is directed. Upasana settles and brightens attention. A prepared mind, with sadhana chatushtaya, reaches the box of inquiry without last-second wobble; if the runway is sloppy - restless, dull, conflicted - later stages have nothing clean to convert into vertical lift.

2) Balancing the Pole (Sravana–Manana) -

Pole-vaulting: From the first steps, the athlete balances a long, living lever. The grip is firm yet supple; wrists guide without strangling. The pole tip must neither skate nor dig prematurely; its angle keeps adjusting to match speed and stride. Over-gripping freezes the shoulders; under-gripping lets the pole wander. Balance is intelligent responsiveness, not brute control.

Vedanta: Sravana (listening to the teaching from a sampradayavit tattva-darshi guru) and manana (resolving doubts) are this intelligent balance. Sastra is the pramana that reveals the ever-present Atman. The "grip" is how the buddhi relates to sastra: tight enough to stay with the

precise meaning, relaxed enough to let sastra do the showing. Over-grip becomes dogmatism; under-grip becomes skepticism or spiritual sampling. Proper balance aligns reason with revelation: tarka serves, it does not command; experience is respected but does not dictate what the Self must be. By the end of manana, the vision is conceptually firm: "I am awareness (sakshi), not the body-mind; the world is mithya (dependent reality); fullness is not away from me."

3) Loading the Pole (Sraddha in Sastra–Guru–Isvara) -

Pole-vaulting: At the plant, the athlete transfers body weight into the pole in one seamless moment. This loading bends the pole and stores energy. It works only if the vaulter trusts the pole to take the load and return it. Half-hearted loading wastes the run-up; over-aggressive loading jams timing. True loading is total, measured, and confident.

Vedanta: When manana has clarified meaning, the mind must lean fully into the method - this is sraddha: tested, intelligent trust in the Sastra pramana, the guru who wields it, and Isvara whose order the whole sadhana unfolds within. Sraddha is not credulity; it is the courage to put your weight on what you have verified is reliable. You stop looking sideways for a different pole; you stop demanding "proofs" from transient experiences. You let the teaching hold your existential weight: "If this is the Self as taught, let me stand as that understanding here and now." That full dependence on the right means is what initiates true elevation.

4) Take-Off (Nididhyasana) -

Pole-vaulting: When the plant is clean and the pole is loaded, speed converts to vertical lift. The take-off leg drives, the trail leg swings long, and the torso rises while the pole continues to bend and then to unbend, returning stored energy. Timing is everything: muscles do not "create" height so much as coordinate the conversion of what was already gathered on the runway.

Vedanta: As a clean plant and fully loaded pole convert forward speed into height, nididhyasana converts prior preparation - dharma, karma–upasana yoga, sravana–manana clarity, and sraddha - into stable abidance. It does not manufacture a new state; like muscles at

take-off, it coordinates what is already stored: the recognition "I am awareness, not the body-mind." The take-off leg is applying this meaning in live situations (happy/sad, praise/blame, gain/loss) so reactivity gives way to lift. The long trail-leg swing is sustained attention that lets old identifications (vasanas) unwind – "neti neti" while remaining with the witness. As the pole bends and returns energy, the sastra-vision you trusted rises unforced right when stress peaks. Timing is crucial: neither chasing experiences nor overworking techniques, but letting insight, attention, and devotion meet at impact - so understanding stands upright on its own.

5) The 180-Degree Inversion (Objectifying Chidabhasa) -

Pole-vaulting: Mid-air the athlete inverts - feet to the sky, hips rise above shoulders, eyes track the bar. What felt like forward now becomes upward; orientation flips. The pole continues to guide the body's center over the bar even as the hands begin to relax their role.

Vedanta: At the crest of contemplation, the mind performs a 180-degree inward turn. The former "subject" - the antahkarana lit by reflected consciousness (chidabhasa) - is seen as object. The true subject, pure awareness (sakshi-Chaitanya), is recognized as self-evident and unobjectifiable. This is called akhandakara-vritti – a thought-form whose content is the non-dual, undivided Reality. Nothing new is produced; a confusion is merely removed. You do not become something; you cease pretending to be what you are not. The mind, once the seat of identity, is now a lit instrument, known and used.

6) Releasing the Pole (Sublating Dependence on Means) -

Pole-vaulting: As the torso clears the bar, the hands release the pole. Holding on now would drag the pole into the bar; letting go too early would forfeit lift. The release is neither disdain for the pole nor forgetfulness of its help; it is the exact recognition that the pole's job for this vault is complete.

Vedanta: When knowledge is firm, the internal dependence on Sastra, guru, upasana, dharma–karma–anusthana, and even Isvara-bhakti as psychological crutches is sublated. You do not

discard or disrespect them; you continue to study, serve, and pray in vyavahara. But the interior stance – "I need those to be whole" – drops. Timing matters. Premature release – dropping sastra/guru/bhakti before clarity – produces spiritual free-fall: quietism, cynicism, or subtle ego. Prolonged clutching – never allowing knowledge to stand alone – produces dependency, ritualism, or concept-addiction. Releasing at the right moment honors the method as method: it brought you here; it does not carry you past the bar.

7) Clearing the Bar (Abidance as What You Always Are) -

Pole-vaulting: The athlete arches cleanly over the crossbar and descends into the pit with the confidence that the jump has been made. There is no straining mid-fall; gravity, once a foe to overcome, is now simply part of a smooth landing.

Vedanta: The "bar" is vyavaharika limitation – the felt sense of being bound, lacking, separate. When adhyasa (superimposition) is removed, there is simple abidance in paramarthika Truth: "I am whole; the world is mithya; Isvara is not 'other' than this non-dual Reality." Life continues – roles, responsibilities, relationships – but without self-referential hunger or fear. Bhakti flowers as gratitude rather than need; Sastra remains a light for teaching, not a prop for living; dharma expresses spontaneously, not anxiously. Freedom is not a peak to maintain; it is the obviousness of what was always the case, now unburdened by confusion.

8) Summarizing -

Grip rightly. Lean totally. Invert cleanly. Release exactly. Abide effortlessly.
That is the entire vault and the entire path: the same precision, the same trust, and the same simplicity when the bar is cleared.

Iti Sriman Narayanasmritih
Vedanta.Mananam@gmail.com